

The New York Times

Editorial
July 12, 1913

A NATIONAL PARK THREATENED

Why the City of San Francisco, with plenty of collateral sources of water supply, should present an emergency measure to the special session of Congress whereby it may invade the Yosemite National Park is one of those Dundrearian things that no fellow can find out. The Hetch Hetchy Valley is described by John Muir as a "wonderfully exact counterpart of the great Yosemite." Why should its inspiring cliffs and waterfalls, its groves and flowery, park-like floor, be spoiled by the grabbers of water and power? The public officials of San Francisco are not even the best sort of politicians; as appraisers and appreciators of natural beauties their taste may be called in question.

It is the aggregation of its natural scenic features, the Secretary of the Interior declared to the would-be invaders of the park when a decade ago they presented their first petition, that "makes the Yosemite Park a wonderland, which the Congress of the United States sought by law to preserve for all coming time."

Their application was rejected. Now they have obtained from the Board of Army Engineers a report approving their project as an emergency measure which is based on incomplete, erroneous, and false evidence. The engineers say in their report that they have merely passed on such data as were presented by the officials of San Francisco, since they had neither time nor money to investigate independently the various projects presented. But San Francisco's officials have withheld from these data the report upon the Mokelumne River and watershed submitted April 24, 1912, in which Engineers Bartel and Manson declare that this system is capable of supplying to the City of San Francisco between 280,000,000 and 430,000,000 gallons daily, the larger amount if certain extinguishable rights are disposed of. Even on their insufficient data, the army engineers report that San Francisco's present water supply can be more than doubled by adding to present nearby sources, and more economically than by going to the Sierras.

The suppressed report, showing that the Mokelumne River is a better and cheaper source than the Hetch Hetchy, says that between 600,000,000 and 700,000,000 gallons of water outside the park may be delivered daily into San Francisco and the adjacent bay region, supplying their growing needs for perhaps a century to come. Representative Scott Ferris, Chairman of the Park Lands Committee, has been apprised of the existence of this report. A receipt of the copy is worth waiting for. If the water-power grabbers are put off this session, or two, or three, or many more sessions, before

gaining an entrance to the Hetch Hetchy Valley, the dwellers of San Francisco will not go thirsty.

The New York Times

Editorial
September 4, 1913

HETCH HETCHY

The only time to set aside national parks is before the bustling needs of civilization have crept upon them. Legal walls must be built about them for defense, for every park will be attacked. Men and municipalities who wish something for nothing will encroach upon them if permitted. The Hetch Hetchy Valley in the Yosemite National Park is an illustration of this universal struggle.

The House of Representatives yesterday passed a bill of the politicians of San Francisco who are nurturing a power project under the guise of providing a water supply for San Francisco. The attempt has been made to suppress a report that the Mokelumne River would furnish a better and cheaper source than the Hetch Hetchy. The army engineers who passed favorably on the data presented to them by the officials of San Francisco -- they made no investigation themselves -- declared that the present water supply of the Far Western city can be more than doubled by adding present nearby sources and more economically than by going 142 miles to the Sierras.

But the nearer sources do not provide the water power found in the magnificent valley which John Muir describes as a "wonderful counterpart of the great Yosemite." The politicians of San Francisco care nothing for matters of natural beauty and taste. They have an eye only for utility, a utility that flows their way. The chief newspapers and organs of public opinion throughout the country have spoken in opposition to the "grab." We trust that the Senate will heed their expression of public sentiment, and, failing that, that President Wilson will veto the measure.

The New York Times

Editorial

October 2, 1913

THE HETCH HETCHY STEAM ROLLER

The Senate of the United States designed by "the Fathers" to afford a wise check upon presumably impulsive action by the lower house and called "the most august deliberative body in the world," now has a chance to put a spoke in the wheel of the steam roller by which San Francisco's official lobby has heretofore crushed opposition to the Hetch Hetchy bill. An inkling of the tactics of the city's officials is given in *The San Francisco Chronicle* of Sept. 12, which says editorially:

While we all desire and expect to get the Tuolumne water, it is not desirable that the bill shall be rushed through without a full and free discussion of the rights of the States. The water which we shall need for the next few years will have to be got by the development of the Spring Valley property, [the present chief supply,] and we should make a very poor trade to surrender the rights of the State within its own boundaries in order to get glory for our municipal officials just as an election is coming on.

A prominent advocate of the project has confessed privately that "there are bad things in the bill, but they were put there to get votes." The House debate gives reason for thinking that the measure is a clumsy and probably unworkable attempt to partition the flow of the Hetch Hetchy watershed between the city and such of the San Joaquin Valley farmers as could thus be bribed to forego their opposition.

The local strength behind the city's rushline is not difficult to understand when one realizes that the bill involves contracts amounting to \$120,000,000, with opportunities of "honest graft." For months, the project has been presented to Congress with persistence and serious misrepresentation. Urged first as a measure of humanity, it has been shown to be a sordid scheme to obtain electric power. Urged as providing the only available source, it is confronted by the conclusive statement of the Board of Army Engineers that "there are several sources of water supply" and that "the determining factor is one of cost." Urged on the ground that it cannot injure Hetch Hetchy because that valley is inaccessible and altogether negligible, it is shown by Mr. Long, the city's attorney and advocate, that nine miles of roadway would make it accessible, and by Mr. Pinchot's confession that it is "one of the great wonders of the world." Its altogether reputable official sponsors are Secretary Lane, who ten years ago as attorney of San Francisco became an advocate of the project, and Secretaries Houston and Garrison,

who half-heartedly join in approval, besides three bureau heads who have the temerity to agree with their chiefs. In Congress the bill finds strong support in the two Public Lands Committees, composed as they are preponderatingly of trans-Mississippians, who have a natural and proper bias in favor of the local use of the forest reserves, and who apply this theory illogically to the national parks.

The act creating Yosemite National Park sets forth the importance and duty of reserving these wonders "in their original state," and the world has a moral right to demand that this purpose shall be adhered to. The "beautiful lake" theory deceives nobody. An artificial lake and dam are not a substitute for the unique beauty of the valley. Senators cannot transfer to a committee the grave responsibility that rests upon them.

The New York Times

Editorial
October 9, 1913

THE STEAM ROLLER HALTED

The Hetch Hetchy steam roller did not work smoothly on Saturday and therefore on Tuesday it was withdrawn for repairs. In other words, the Senate voted to postpone to the regular session in December the bill to give over a large part of the Yosemite National Park to the tender mercies of the San Francisco Philistines who know how to "improve" the handiwork of the Creator. The \$45,000,000 electric power franchise must wait, despite the appeals of the two Senators from Nevada. Senators Borah, Gronna and Poindexter, all Westerners by the way, were not satisfied, but exhibited a Missourian desire "to be shown" and an unwillingness to be swept off their feet. They asked embarrassing questions, and showed a creditable sense of Senatorial responsibility for a piece of legislation of which Mr. Mondell in the House debate said that its conflicting provisions made his head fairly whirl.

The determining factor in the postponement was this telegram from Senator Works of California, who apparently went home to get in touch with his constituents:

Coronado, Cal. Oct. 2, 1913

Hon. Reed Smoot: I have sent the following telegram to Senator Myers. I have satisfied myself that the Hetch Hetchy bill should not pass without further investigation. Ninety-nine per cent of water users in the irrigation districts are strongly opposed to it, and claim that they were betrayed by those who consented to the compromise measure. They claim that thousands of acres of land in their districts and outside of them will be deprived of water to which they are entitled, and that they can show that this sacrifice of the best and most fertile lands in the State is not necessary to the interest of San Francisco. Because of this compromise that they indignantly repudiate, this phase of the question has not been investigated. The bill should not be rushed through this session under such circumstances. It is too serious not only to the parties directly interested but to the whole State.

JOHN D. WORKS

The plain fact is that mid-Western, Southern and Eastern Senators have been culpably inclined to leave to the determination of some of their Far Western colleagues a

measure involving millions upon millions of dollars, grave constitutional questions, revolutionary policies concerning franchises and conservation, and the higher interests of a people proud of our noble scenery. They cannot too promptly set themselves at work to study the question in its broadest and highest aspects: the immense value of great natural wonders, the folly of giving away valuable national resources.

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Editorial
December 4, 1913

HETCH HETCHY

Does President Wilson know that the enterprising lobbyists for the seizing of the Hetch Hetchy valley in the interest of the power companies of San Francisco call their bill an "Administration measure"? The leading newspapers from Maine to California have expressed the strong public sentiment that exists against the spoliation of this national park. Will President Wilson let his name be used as favoring a local and very selfish interest against the best opinion of the country?

The lobby has had its effect with the Interior Department. Bureaucratic influences are at work in Washington to make it appear that the Administration stands back of the selfish measure. President Wilson can put a stop to this business by a word seasonably spoken.

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Any city that would surrender a city park for commercial purposes would be set down as going backward. So far as we are aware, such a case is unknown. Any State Legislature that would surrender a State park would set a dangerous and deplorable example. When the Congress of the United States approves the municipal sandbagging of a national park in order to give some clamorous city a few dollars, against the protests of the press and the people, it is time for real conservationists to ask, What next?

The Senate passed the Hetch Hetchy bill by a vote of 42 to 25. The bill converts a beautiful national park into a water tank for the City of San Francisco. The San Francisco advocates of the spoilation handsomely maintained at Washington, month after month, quite openly, a very competent and plausible lobbyist, and save for a few hearings and protects he occupied the Washington field most comfortably alone and unopposed. For this first invasion of the cherished national parks the people of the country at large are themselves to blame. The battle was lost by supine indifference, weakness, and lack of funds. All conservation causes in this country are wretchedly supported financially, and this one seems not to have been supported at all.

Ever since the business of nation-making began, it has been the unwritten law of conquest that people who are too lazy, too indolent, or too parsimonious to defend their heritages will lose them to the hosts that know how to fight and to finance campaigns. The American people have been whipped in the Hetch Hetchy fight. They had the press and enlightened public opinion and all men of public spirit on their side. The lobbyist was too much for them, although at the end the bill was rapidly losing support. If the people had set up a lobby they might have won.

Note: President Woodrow Wilson signed the Raker Bill into law on December 19, 1913.
